



# Elder Financial Abuse

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

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## Sweetheart Scams

*My brand new boyfriend/girlfriend needs money. Should I be suspicious?*

Seniors have been targeted by con artists in what are known as "sweetheart scams." These cons are much like other consumer scams, except these con artists are peddling their time and purported affection – all in an attempt to get the victim's money. In today's world of email, dating websites and social media, these types of scams have increased as perpetrators use the anonymity of the Internet to snare victims.

Often the perpetrators promise a love relationship but seldom follow through. Meanwhile, as the victim's confidence is gained, the con artist begins to exploit the senior for money, personal expenses, car repairs, etc. Once the perpetrator gets money, access to financial accounts or other assets, he/she often disappears, leaving the senior feeling exploited and ashamed.

### Warning Signs

- A stranger approaches you in a public place, quickly shows interest in you and immediately wants to spend time with you. Be particularly careful if the interested person is much younger and appears too eager to go out with you.
- Shortly after meeting, the person asks you to help them financially.
- The person professes his/her love at an early stage of the relationship.
- In an online or email message, a stranger says he/she shares your interests and wants to meet. The person keeps finding excuses to avoid meeting in person, complains about a lack of money and asks for your help.
- The person's correspondence contains poor spelling and grammar.
- The person claims to be working overseas.

### Prevention

- Do not be afraid to consult with family and trusted friends if you fear the person is after your money.